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Gérôme

Albert Keim, Frederic Taber Cooper

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GÉRÔME
(1824-1904)

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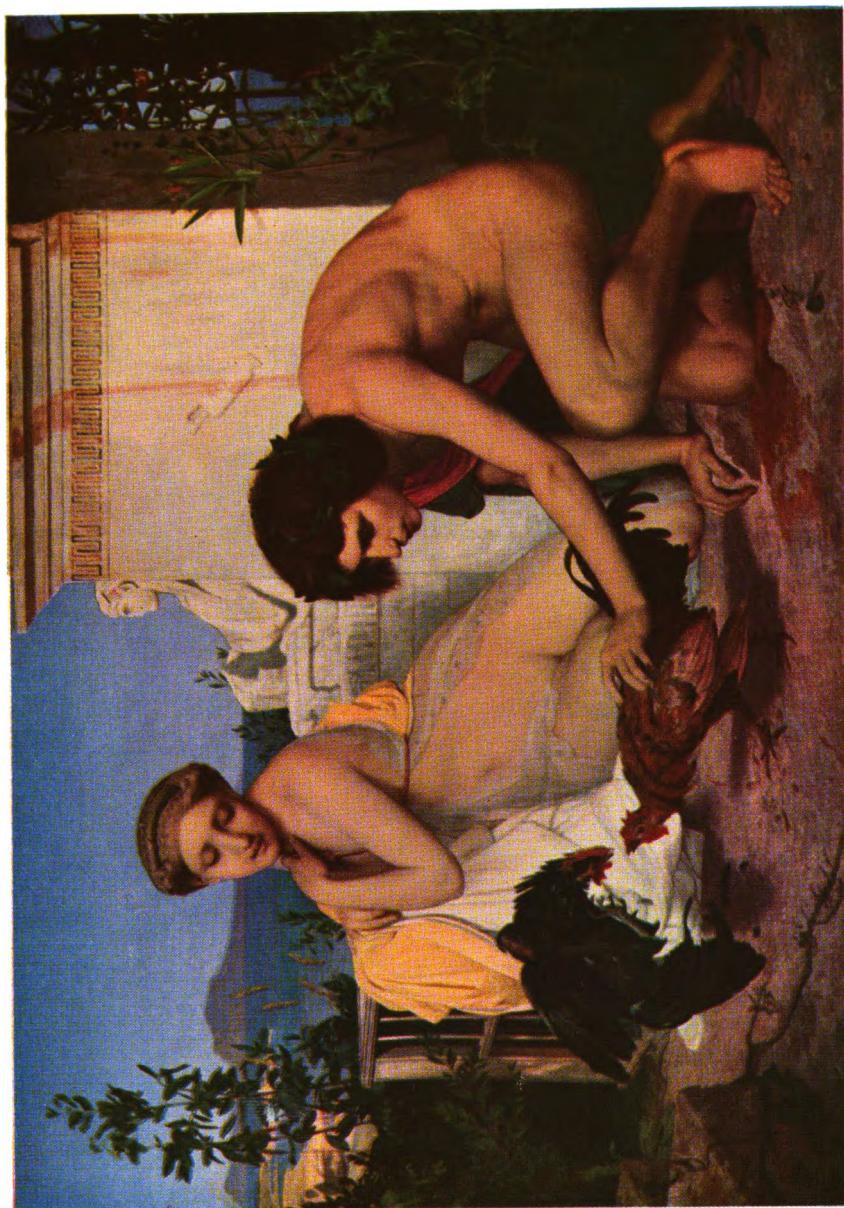
FROMENTIN PERUGINO

**PLATE I.—YOUNG GREEKS ENGAGED IN
COCK FIGHTING**
(In the Luxembourg Museum, Paris)

This was Gérôme's first picture. It was exhibited at the Salon of 1847, and achieved a brilliant success. Théophile Gautier, who was a critic hard to please, bestowed upon it some enviable praise. In later years the artist found much to censure in his early work; but the public, less severely critical, admired the graceful nudity of the young forms and the combative ardour of the two adversaries.

PIERRE LAFITTE & CIE, PARIS

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GÉRÔME

BY ALBERT KEIM

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH
BY, FREDERIC TABER COOPER

ILLUSTRATED WITH EIGHT
REPRODUCTIONS IN COLOUR



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CONTENTS

| | Page |
|--------------------------|-----------|
| Introduction | II |
| Life of Gérôme | 17 |
| The Artist's Work | 43 |
| The Art of Gérôme | 72 |

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

| Plates | | Page |
|---------------|---|-------------|
| I. | Young Greeks Engaged in Cock Fighting Frontispiece (In the Luxembourg Museum) | 14 |
| II. | Reception of the Siamese Ambassadors | 14 |
| III. | Anacreon, with Bacchus and Cupid (In the Toulouse Museum) | 24 |
| IV. | Police Verso | 34 |
| | (In a Private Collection, United States) | |
| V. | The Prisoner | 40 |
| | (In the Nantes Museum) | |
| VI. | The Last Prayer | 50 |
| | (In a Private Collection, United States) | |
| VII. | The Vendor of Rugs | 60 |
| | (In a Private Collection, United States) | |
| VIII. | The Two Majesties | 70 |
| | (In a Private Collection, United States) | |



I

INTRODUCTION

GÉRÔME has his allotted place among the illustrious French painters of the Nineteenth Century. He achieved success, honours, official recognition; and he deserved them, if not for the compelling personality of his temperament, at least for his assiduous industry, his

accurate, methodical, and picturesque way of seeing people and things, and the amazing and fertile variety both of his choice and his interpretation of subjects.

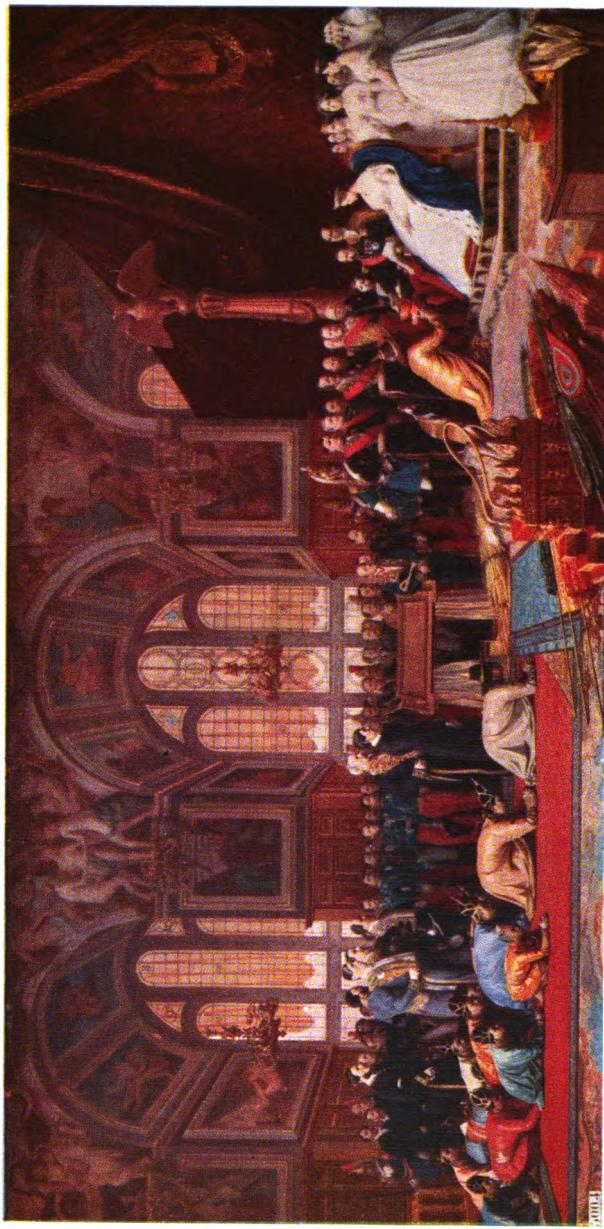
He was a pupil of Paul Delaroche and seems to have inherited the latter's adroitness in seizing upon the one salient and emotional detail in a composition. Like that historian-painter of the *Death of the Duc de Guise*, Gérôme excelled in always giving a dramatic stage setting to the persons and the events which he knew how to conjure up with such learned and scrupulous care.

In spite of his versatility, and notwithstanding that many a vast canvas has demonstrated his ingenious and resourceful talent, he takes his place beside Meissonier because of the extreme importance that he attached to accuracy and precise effects.

Although it is some years since he passed away, Gérôme has left behind him living memories among his friends and pupils, many of

**PLATE II.—RECEPTION OF THE SIAMESE
AMBASSADORS**
(In the Museum at Versailles)

This picture possesses a curious interest because it shows in what a picturesque manner Gérôme could execute a painting officially ordered. He received the commission in 1865, through the Imperial Household. He has rendered with much felicity all the pompous and highly coloured aspect of the scene, very effective in the sumptuous setting of the Salle des Fêtes at Fontainebleau.



whom have in their turn become masters. Both as man and as artist he was and still continues to be profoundly regretted, independently of all divergences of opinion, method, and temperament.

A master of oriental lore, a curious and subtle antiquarian, a chronicler of ancient and modern life, rigorous at times, but more often distinguished for his charm and delicacy,—such is Gérôme as he has revealed himself to us through the medium of his abundant works.

Whether he paints us the men of the Desert and the almas of Egypt, or shows us the gladiators of the Circus, the death of Caesar, the leisure hours of Frederick II, the dreams of a Bonaparte, or takes us to the *Winter Duel in the Bois de Boulogne after the Masked Ball*, a picture that achieved much popularity, Gérôme never fails to catch and hold attention by starting contrasts of colour combined with a fine accuracy of line work.

But what matter the means through which

an effect is sought if they prove successful both in the general impression produced by the work as a whole and in the charm of the separate details,—in other words, if the result justifies the effort?

Effort, in Gérôme's case, meant literally a valiant and noble persistence. He was ceaselessly in search of something new. In spite of assured fame, he never repainted the same subject. During the later years of his life, his ambition was to be at the same time an illustrious painter and a sculptor of recognized merit; and in this he succeeded. His attempt to revive, after a fashion of his own, the precious lost art of antique sculpture, although greeted with a wide divergence of opinions, remains a noteworthy achievement.

On the eve of his eightieth year and abrupt decease, Gérôme still laboured with the ardour and the splendid faith of youth. He sets an encouraging example, as fine and as stimulating as the best of his splendid pictures.

THE LIFE OF GÉRÔME

Jean-Léon Gérôme was born at Vesoul on May 11, 1824. Throughout his life he retained a slight trace of the Franche-Comté accent, which gave a keener relish to his witty anecdotes and piquant retorts.

He belonged to a family holding an honoured place among the bourgeoisie. His excellent biographer, M. Moreau-Vauthier, relates that his grandfather was on the point of taking orders when the Revolution broke out. His father was a watchmaker and goldsmith at Vesoul. As a child, he himself was in delicate health.

Nevertheless, he proved himself a good student at the college in the city of his birth. While there he studied both Greek and Latin. His instructor in drawing, Cariage, having noticed his early efforts, gave him much good advice and encouragement.

At the age of fourteen, he copied a picture by Decamps, which had found its way to Vesoul

from Paris. The story goes that his father forthwith favoured the idea that he should take up the vocation of an artist. There is no use in exaggerating. As a matter of fact, his family dreaded the hardships of so hazardous a career. But, upon receiving his bachelor's degree at the age of sixteen, a degree which at that epoch was by no means common, he obtained permission to go to the capital and pursue his studies under the auspices of Paul Delaroche, to whom he was provided with a letter of introduction.

It is pleasant to picture the young man setting forth alone by *diligence* and applying himself bravely to the task of acquiring talent and renown.

He was most faithful in his attendance at the studio of Delaroche, who, being the son-in-law of Horace Vernet, possessed at that time not only a wide reputation as professor, but also an enormous influence both at the École des Beaux-Arts and at the court of Louis-Philippe.

Delaroche, who has aptly been called the

Casimir Delavigne of painting, a romanticist who stopped short of being a revolutionary, parted company with the cold traditionalists of the older school in the profound importance that he attached to accuracy and to the truth and interest of movement.

Gérôme was destined to draw his inspiration from analogous principles. While interesting himself profoundly in costumes, in surroundings, in local colour, he always avoided excess and maintained an almost classic restraint even in the most modern of his fantasies.

Delaroche's pupils were a lively set. Gérôme found life pleasant in the studio where Cham amused himself by passing himself off upon strangers as "the patron," and where his comrades were such men as Alfred Arago, Hébert, Hamon, Jalabert, Landelle, Picou, and Yvon.

He won their regard by his flow of spirits and his caustic humour. At this period he supported himself by copying paintings and making drawings for the newspapers; but, although a

small monthly income of a hundred francs assured him comparative security, he was uneasy. Although only eighteen, the young man was impatient to show what he could do. He was seeking his path.

He took his first step towards finding it when he accompanied his teacher to Italy after the latter had closed his studio. He remained there for an entire year.

Upon his return, he studied for a time under Gleyre, after which he worked for some months on Delaroche's *Bonaparte Crossing the Alps*.

In 1847, Gérôme made his début at the Salon with a veritable master-stroke. At an exposition where Delacroix's *Shipwrecked Bark* and Couture's *Roman Orgy* monopolized the public gaze, the young artist attracted keen attention by his *Young Greeks Engaged in Cock Fighting*. Théophile Gautier enthusiastically proclaimed the merits of this work, which brought Gérôme much valued praise and some influential supporters.

We shall revert again to this significant can-

vas, which since 1874 has hung in the Luxembourg Museum, and with which the artist, when he later attained full mastery of his art, found all manner of fault.

The first meeting between this painter of twenty-three, upon whom renown had just begun to smile, and Gautier, magnanimous prince of criticism and poetry, took place under circumstances that deserve to be recorded.

Gérôme was betaking himself to the offices of the *Artiste*, at that time presided over by Arsène Houssaye; in his hand he held a line drawing of his own recent idyll of classic times. On the staircase he encountered Gautier who had paused there, and who began to talk to him in glowing terms of the Salon and especially of a painting by a newcomer, named Gérôme.

“But that is I, myself!” cried the young man with keen emotion, and he showed his drawing to the author of *Enamels and Cameos*.

Continuing to draw his inspiration from antiquity, he set to work with a stouter heart, in

a studio on the Rue de Fleurus, which he shared with Hamon and Picou, associating with artists and with musicians such as Lalo and Membrée.

His labours were twice interrupted: first, by an attack of typhoid fever, through which his mother came to nurse him; and secondly, by the Revolution of 1848 when, in compliance with the expressed desire of his comrades, he was appointed adjutant major of the National Guards.

It was about this same period that he received a first class medal and found himself well advanced upon the road to fame.

“I have always had the nomadic instinct,” Gérôme used to declare, and complacently questioned whether he did not have a strain of gypsy blood among his ancestors. In his notes and souvenirs, which he entrusted to his relative and friend, the painter Timbal, he confesses, along with his various artistic scruples, his passionate love of travel.

He was haunted by a longing to visit Greece, and more especially the Orient, with its marvel-

**PLATE III.—ANACREON WITH BACCHUS
AND CUPID**
(In the Museum at Toulouse)

Gérôme had a magic brush that permitted him to undertake all types of painting with the same facility. This is how he so often happened to treat subjects taken from antiquity and was able to render them in all their classic beauty. It is not without interest to compare him, in this style of painting, with Nicholas Poussin, whom he admired, and with Puvis de Chavannes, whose method he execrated.



lous skies, its resplendent colours, its barbaric and motley races of men.

In 1853, in the company of a number of friends, he traversed Germany and Hungary, planning a lengthy visit to Constantinople. Owing to the war, he was forced to cut short his trip at Galatz. But he brought back a collection of energetic and striking sketches of Russian soldiers, which later served good purpose in his *Recreation in Camp, Souvenir of Moldavia*. And in like manner, in all his distant journeyings, he invariably showed the same eagerness to seize and transcribe his original documents, content to let them speak for themselves, without his having to distort them to fit the special purpose that he had in view.

This painting found a place in the exposition of 1855, together with *The Age of Augustus*, a notable achievement in which Gérôme revealed the measure, if not of his true personality, at least of his lofty conscience and his integrity as an artist enamoured of accuracy and truth, even in

the imaginary element inseparable from this type of allegorical apotheosis. Notwithstanding a few dissenting opinions, these two works were judged at their true value, and Gérôme received the cross of the Legion of Honour.

At this time he was scarcely more than thirty years old. A most brilliant career henceforth lay open before him.

Gérôme remains, beyond question, the unrivalled painter of Egypt, whose aspects, enchanting and sinister alike, he has reproduced in a series of pictures of finished workmanship and vibrant colouring.

It was in 1856 that, together with a few friends, among others Bartholdi, then twenty-two years old, he undertook his long tour through Egypt. To-day, one can go to Cairo or up the Nile as casually as to Nice or Italy and with almost as little trouble. In those days it was not a question of a simple excursion, of which any and every amateur tourist would be capable, but of a veritable expedition.

Unforeseen adventures appealed to Gérôme, for he was brave, energetic, and eager for new sensations. M. Frédéric Masson, the eminent historian, who was one of his companions through the desert, has since shown him to us, in a series of graphic recollections, as perpetually on his feet, indefatigable, ready to endure any and every vicissitude for the sake of sketching a site or a silhouette.

His stay in Egypt was for Gérôme a period of enchantment. He has left, in regard to it, some hasty but expressive notes. He passed four months on the Nile, well filled months, consecrated to fishing, hunting, and painting, all the way from Diametta to Philae. He remained the four succeeding months at Cairo, in an old dwelling that Suliman Pasha rented to the young Frenchmen. "Happy epoch!" wrote the painter, "Care-free, full of hope, and with the future before us. The sky was blue."

He returned to Paris with an ample harvest of sketches, a supply of curious, novel, and strik-

ing themes to work up. M. Moreau-Vauthier shows him to us at that period of his existence, full of unflagging energy and pleasant enthusiasm, in the company of Brion, Lambert, Schutzenberger, and Toulmouche,—not to forget his monkey Jacques, who took his place at the family table arrayed in coat and white cravat, but would slink away and hide himself in shame when, as a punishment for some misdeed, they decked him out as a ragpicker.

What jolly parties were held in that “Tea Chest,” in which Gérôme then had his studio, Rue de Notre-Dame-des-Champs! It was the scene of many a festival, entertainment, and joyous puppet show, attended by spectators such as Rachel (whose portrait Gérôme painted in 1861), her sister, George Sand, Baudry, Cabanel, Hébert, and others.

This was, nevertheless, an epoch of prolific work and constant research. Gérôme passed ceaselessly from one type of painting to another; one might say that he rested from his exotic

landscapes by evoking, with an ever new lavishness of detail, curious or affecting scenes from Greek and Roman antiquity.

Thus rewards and successes multiplied, and he experienced all the joys of triumph. Already honorary member of the Academy of Besançon, he was appointed professor at the École des Beaux-Arts in 1863, and in 1865, member of the Institut, where he succeeded Heim.

Meanwhile he fought a duel with revolvers and was gravely wounded. His mother hastened once again to his bedside and saved his life a second time. Since the ball had passed through his right arm, complications affecting his hand were feared. The artist declared that if necessary he would learn to paint with his left. No sooner was he cured than off he started again, bound for Egypt, whence he passed to Arabia and, more venturesome than ever, continued on his way, as one of his biographers phrased it, "making sketches clear to the summit of Mt. Sinai."

He was destined to make still other journeys,

notably that of 1868 in company of Messrs. Bonnet, Frédéric Masson, and Lenoir; and his companions paid tribute to his unfailing spirits and his powers of endurance. But at the age of forty he married. The bride was Mlle. Goupil, daughter of the well-known picture dealer.

He was a thorough man of the world and a favoured guest of the Duc d'Aumale, who appreciated his ready wit and bought his *After the Masquerade* for the sum of 20,000 francs. In 1865 he received from the Beaux-Arts and the Imperial Household an order for *The Reception of the Siamese Ambassadors at Fontainebleau*.

Gérôme was also numbered among Compiègne's habitual visitors, along with Berlioz, Gustave Doré, Guillaume, Merimée, Viollet-le-Duc, and others. M. Moreau-Vauthier, who with pious zeal has collected the more interesting anecdotes of his life, relates that he had a special gift for organizing charades: he was scene setter and costumer. At Fontainebleau, he took the Empress out alone in a row-boat.

Surrounded by devoted friends, such as Augier, Charles Blanc, Dumas, Clery, his brother-in-law, Frémiet, Gérôme continued his laborious and tranquil life in his vast atelier on the Boulevard de Clichy.

His days were passed in drawing and painting in his canvases. Towards the end of the afternoon he would mount his horse and take a turn in the Bois. He exhibited annually up to the year of the war. After that, he lived in a sort of retirement until 1874, when, after a trip to Algeria with G. Boulanger and Poilpot, he won a medal of honour. *A Collaboration*, *Rex Tibicen* (The King Flutist), and *His Gray Eminence*, exhibited simultaneously, revealed him in full possession of his ingenious and many-sided art.

New and resounding triumphs awaited him at the Exposition Universelle of 1878, where he first revealed himself as a sculptor. As a matter of fact, he had for a long time amused himself at modelling in clay. He used to go to Frémiet's

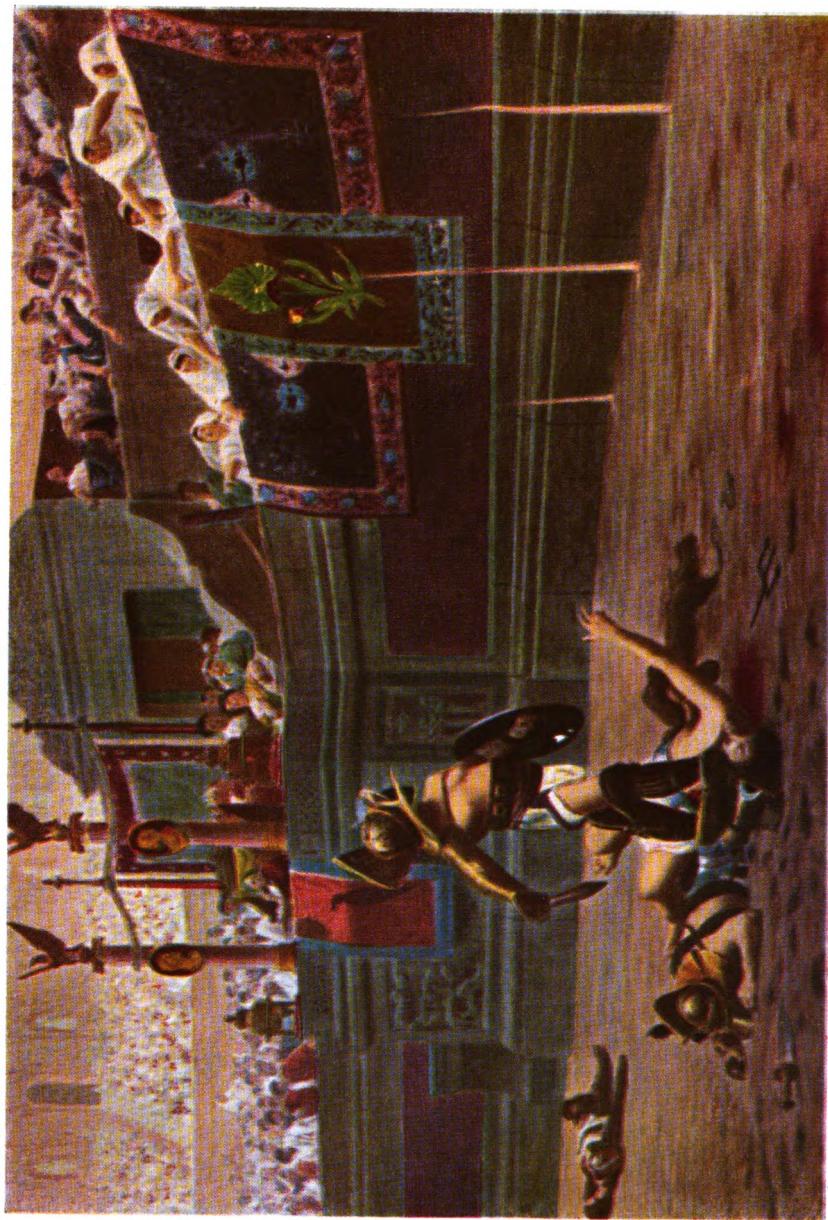
studio to do his modelling, and Frémiet, by way of exchange, would come to paint in his. His two groups, *Gladiators* and *Anacreon*, *Bacchus and Cupid*, won him a second class medal to take its place beside the medal of honour he had previously received for his paintings. That same year, at the age of fifty-four, he was raised to the rank of Commander. Cham expressed the joy of all his friends by writing to him wittily: "I follow the example of your ribbon, I fall upon your neck."

He was yet to gain still further honours: a first class medal as sculptor, in 1881; to be declared *Hors Concours* (Not entered for Competition) at the Expositions of 1889 and 1900; and to be named Grand Officer of the Legion of Honour.

From 1880 onward, excepting for a few flying visits to Spain and Italy, Gérôme lived at his hotel in Paris, where he kept up a rather lavish establishment, including horses and dogs, up to the time of the successive deaths of his father and his son. It was the latter for whose tomb he carved a touching figure of *Grief*.

PLATE IV.—POLLINE VERSO
(In a Private Collection, United States)

The scenes from Roman antiquity repeatedly appealed to Gérôme's talent, notably in the case of the Games of the Circus, the dramatic value and brilliant colour of which he fully appreciated. In *Pollice Verso*, he shows us the victorious gladiator, who, in order to know whether or not he is to despatch his adversary, turns a questioning glance towards the Vestals, who invert their thumbs, decreeing death for the vanquished and gasping opponent.



His studio at Bougival held him for many a long day, while the season lasted. While there, he worked with extraordinary assiduity, barely giving himself time enough to appear among his guests and hastily swallow a few mouthfuls of the mid-day meal. He owned at one time another country house at Coulevon, near Vesoul, but this he sold to one of his former pupils, Muenier. He remained none the less the chief pride of his native town, where, even during the artist's life, there was a street bearing the name of Gérôme.

His favourite summering place, however, was in the heart of Normandy at Saint-Martin, near to Pont-Lévêque, where he possessed a delightful property.

“He is a charming man, of rare integrity and fascination. Very simple, too, like all men of real power, who need not exert themselves in order to prove their strength.” It is after this fashion that M. Jules Claretie sums him up in his exquisite study of *Contemporary Painters and Sculptors*. M. Frédéric Masson, his faithful

friend, has drawn the following excellent portrait of Gérôme: "A head firmly set upon a long neck, features vigorously modelled in acute angles, sunken cheeks, complexion bronzed, eyes brilliant and strangely black, moustache obstinate and bristling, hair almost kinky, and sprouting in massive clumps, . . . a straight nose set in a lean face, . . . figure exceedingly slender and flexible, waist medium, but well modelled."

Such he appears in his painting of himself as a sculptor in his studio, absorbed, in his alert and perennially youthful old age, by his new task of making polychrome statues. M. Aimé Morot, his son-in-law, has shown him to us in his intimate life, simple, natural, and at one and the same time alert and caustic. We find him also thoroughly alive in the fine bust by Carpeaux and in the medal by Chaplain, now in the Luxembourg.

M. Dagnan-Bouveret saw him under another aspect. In the portrait he has given us, we have the master authoritatively proclaiming his

convictions. This distinguished artist, by the way, was formerly a pupil of Gérôme's. One day when he was complimenting the latter upon his method of teaching, Gérôme replied, in his loud, assertive voice: "When I undertake to do a thing, I do it to the very end. I am a man with a sense of duty."

As professor at the École des Beaux-Arts he continued to fulfil his duty for a period of forty years. While conducting his classes he showed himself grave and stern, even sardonic when so inclined. In front of a canvas too thickly coated, he would exclaim: "The paint shop man will be pleased"; or perhaps he would move around to get a side view and then play upon his words, saying: "How that picture stands out!"

He had a good many foreigners in his studio, Spaniards such as La Gandara, Americans like Bridgman and Harrison, and Russians such as the celebrated and courageous Verestschagen who, according to M. Léon Coutil, declared, in speaking of Gérôme, "Next to my dear Skobeloff,

he is the most resolute man that I have ever met."

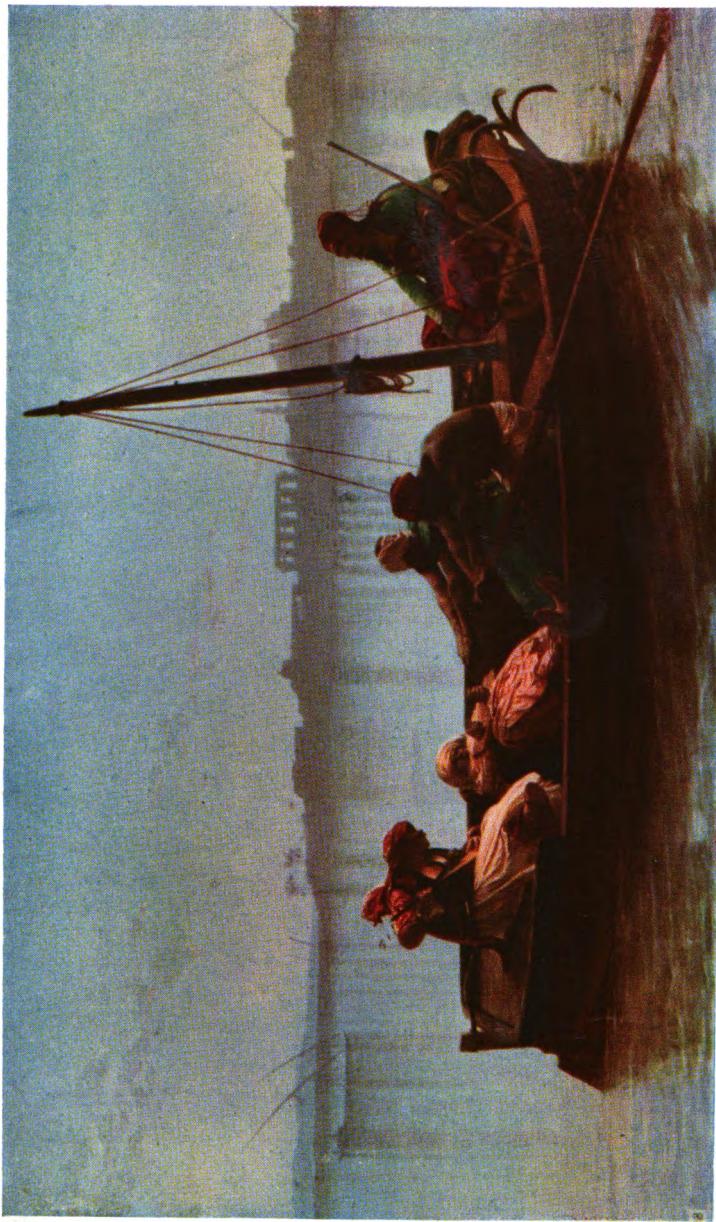
Gérôme was frank and unreserved in his opinions. Having become, so to speak, the official representative of French painting, he was exposed to repeated attacks. He did not hesitate to flout unmercifully and to pursue with a veritable hatred such artists as had adopted formulas opposed to his own,— and among them some of the biggest and the ones least open to discussion. M. Besnard, who was not a pupil of his, nevertheless owed him his *Prix de Rome*.

Many were the circumstances under which he showed his energetic firmness; for example, when the Prince de la Moskowa wished to fix a quarrel on him and prevent him from exhibiting *The Death of Mareschal Ney*, he evoked this noble declaration from Gérôme: "The painter has his rights as much as the historian."

And when a prominent politician criticised the official curriculum without proposing anything to take its place, it was, according to M.

PLATE V.—THE PRISONER
(In the Museum of Nantes)

Gérôme had travelled extensively in the East, for he loved its vigorous colouring and picturesque customs. Here is a scene glimpsed from the banks of the Nile, and he has transcribed it in this superb picture, vibrant with colour and harmonious in composition.



Moreau-Vauthier, again Gérôme who replied: "Gentlemen, it is easier to be an incendiary than a fireman!"

This firmness, however, did not prevent him, so this same biographer points out, from being sensitive to such a degree that he could not bear to watch a cat of Frémiet's preparing to devour a nest of sparrows. He used to bring champagne and dainty viands as presents to his pupils. His humour, so M. Moreau-Vauthier goes on to say, served as a mask to hide his sentiment. Poilpot, to whom Gérôme was destined later to give useful counsels for his panorama of Reischoffen, was working prior to 1870 in his studio. One day he went to show him some drawings. His master, having looked him over, inquired: "So, then, you have no shirt?" "No, patron," he replied, "I never wear any." The next day, Poilpot received a commission for a copy of an official portrait of Napoleon III, together with an advance payment of 600 francs. This pretty anecdote does as much honour to

the pride of the one as to the delicacy of the other.

Gérôme sincerely loved the youth, the fantasy, the gaiety of France, and more especially of Paris. One perceives it in reading the sparkling preface which he wrote for M. Miguel Zamacois' *Articles of Paris*, blithely illustrated by M. Guillaume. He was not too proud to appear at costume balls, nor to continue to take an interest in them even after he had ceased to attend them. He once put his name to a picturesque sign for a doll shop in the "Old Paris" exhibit at the Exposition. For an advertisement contest he painted a dog wearing a monocle, with this amusing inscription and play on words, "*O pti cien*" (*O petit chien*, i.e., O little dog). He amused himself by sending to a toy competition, organized by the prefect of police, a little Pompeian saleswoman holding a basket of various toys, and a diminutive police officer brandishing a white club.

Gérôme had always wished for a sudden and brusque death, "without physic and without

night-cap." He was spared both physical and moral decline. At the age of seventy-nine he climbed the stairs, four steps at a time, and sprang upon moving omnibuses running. He died suddenly of a cerebral congestion, on his return from a dinner which he had attended together with his colleagues of the Institut, January 10, 1904.

THE ARTIST'S WORK

It is difficult to enumerate in detail all the works of Gérôme, whose originality and energy were inexhaustible. Only a short time before his death he declared that with the help of the sketches contained in his cupboards he had material enough to keep him busy for twenty-five years longer.

Instead of attempting to draw up a chronological list of his paintings, which would be only approximately correct, even if limited to the more important, it is more profitable to study this conscientious artist under his principal aspects.

Although he made some talented attempts, Gérôme neither was nor wished to be a portrait painter, any more than a painter of modern life. He had, however, as has been pointed out, all the necessary qualities for this type which demands so much precision and assurance. In *The Emperor Napoleon III Receiving the Siamese Ambassadors at the Palace of Fontainebleau*, now in the museum at Versailles, there are eighty portraits. The artist has represented himself, side by side with Meissonier, and the story is told that a certain general accorded him a sitting of only ten minutes.

Besides the large and somewhat sombre portrait of Rachel, which adorns the Stairway of Artists at the Comédie-Française, and which was painted from existing likenesses and from memory, there is scarcely anything else to cite than the portrait of his brother while a student in the Polytechnic School, a *Head of a Woman* (1853, at the museum of Nantes), those of M. Leblond, at Vesoul, mentioned by M. Guillaumin, of

M. A. T. (1864), of Cléry, the great lawyer, and of Charles Garnier, the celebrated architect of the Opéra.

As a sculptor, Gérôme has left some admirable busts, among others those of Mme. Sarah Bernhardt, bequeathed to the National Museum, of *General Cambriels*, of *Henri Lavoix*, the *Monument of Paul Baudry* destined for La Roche-sur-Yon, and, most important of all, the *Equestrian Statue of the Duc d'Aumale*, which is now to be seen at Chantilly, and the model for which is at the museum of Besançon.

Gérôme had a sincere and profound love for antiquity; with him it was not the enjoyment of a contemplative mind, a tranquil amateur art, but that of an historian, an archaeologist coupled with the instinct of a dramatist, a psychologue, let us say, who is eager to discover, in any scene whatever, in the graceful or violent gestures of such and such personages of bygone days, some general application. He was certainly most anxious to suggest interesting or amusing

parallels to modern life, for, in spite of the dissimilarity of the settings, the tinsels, the decorations, over which the artist laboured with an almost devout care of minute detail, human nature to-day is always more or less close to the human nature of Greece or Rome.

“Exhibit that picture, it will bring you honour,” said Paul Delaroche to his pupil, who had shown him, with much misgiving, the *Young Greeks Occupied in Cock Fighting*. “It shows originality and style.” And that was his first success (1847). The grace of the young figures won much admiration. Planche praised the harmony of the composition as a whole. As to Théophile Gautier, he showed himself, as we have already said, highly enthusiastic; he declared that the features of the boy were drawn with extreme subtlety. “As to the cocks,” he added, “they are true prodigies of drawing, animation, and colour; neither Snyders, nor Woenic, nor Oudry, nor Desportes, nor Rousseau, nor any of the known animal painters have attained, after twenty years

of labour, the perfection which M. Gérôme has reached at the first attempt." Let us note immediately that Gérôme was, as a matter of fact, a very great painter of animals. His dogs, his horses, and his lions are the work of a masterly observer.

Closely following upon the *Cock Fight*, we must recall *Anacreon with Bacchus and Cupid* (1848, Toulouse Museum) which Gérôme himself characterized as a "lifeless picture," and which nevertheless earned him a second class medal. Later on he was destined to treat this same subject in marble (Salon of 1881). The polished and somewhat affected grace of *Anacreon* must have especially pleased the painter, because in 1889 he produced a whole series of compositions of delicious daintiness, entitled *Cupid Tipsy*. On the same order of ideas, mention must be made of *Bacchus and Cupid Intoxicated* (1850, Bordeaux Museum), and in addition to these, under the head of what may be called his Hellenic canvases, — in which he succeeded in conjuring

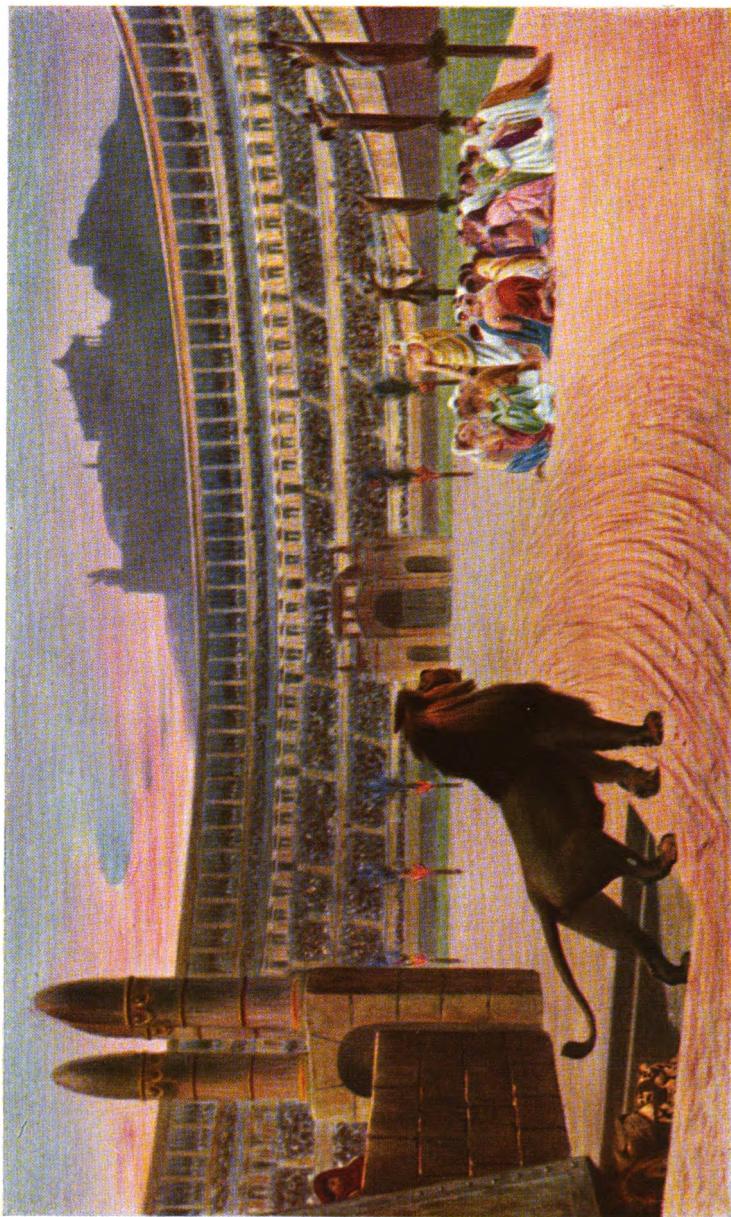
up with magic skill the splendours and graces of that immortal mother of letters and arts, Greece beloved by the gods, — the following pictures, *The Idyll* (1853), full of charm and solid erudition; *The Greek Interior* (1856), of sure and penetrating art; *King Candaules* (1859), in which the sumptuous beauty of Nyssia illuminates the bed-chamber of a Heraclid, 700 years B.C., and in which the interest of the picturesque anecdote is enhanced by the artist's marvellous documentary knowledge.

In the same group must be mentioned *Phryne before the Tribunal* (1861, reëxhibited in 1867), of charming subtlety, but with a little too much emphasis, perhaps, on the irony of its psychology; and, of course, *Socrates Seeking Alcibiades at the House of Aspasia*, analogous in inspiration, and, as it happens, belonging to the same year; and lastly *Daphnis and Chloe* (1898).

Italy also, with all her memories, furnished Gérôme with scenes of striking contrast, evoked from the vanished past, spectacles at once sump-

PLATE VI.—THE LAST PRAYER
(In a Private Collection, United States)

The amphitheatre is filled to overflowing with the crowd that has gathered to witness the martyrdom of the Christians. Around the vast circle, unhappy victims agonize upon the cross. In one corner of the arena, a group of men and women, condemned to die, confess their new faith in an ardent prayer, while from the opened subterraneous passage the ravenous beasts are advancing upon their human prey.



PIERRE LAFITTE & CIE, PARIS

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tuous and barbaric. He caught this atmosphere with rare felicity. *Paestum* (1851) commands attention because of its group of buffaloes, which the Goncourts praised for “their ponderous weight of head, the solidity of their huge bulk, the grouping of their attitudes, the shagginess of their coats, the prevailing sense of grateful coolness.”

It is necessary to assign a place apart, in this series, for the *Augustan Age, Birth of Christ* (1855, Amiens Museum). In his own private opinion, confided to his cousin Timbal, Gérôme held that this enormous composition, measuring ten metres in length by seven in height, lacked inventiveness and originality. It is true that the artist's personality is not clearly revealed in this picture, which is a sort of vast commentary on a phrase by Bossuet, and indisputably draws its inspiration from the *Apotheosis of Homer* by Ingres. Nevertheless, no one can dispute its noble qualities, and to borrow a phrase from Théophile Gautier, its “high philosophic

significance." Beside Augustus Caesar deified appears Rome, in the form of a woman, helmeted, armed with a buckler, and clad in a red chlamys; then Tiberius, standing on the right, then statesmen and poets, Caesar, Cleopatra, Anthony, Brutus, and Cassius grouped together; lastly the throng of all nations on their knees, admirably rendered. In the centre, relatively unimportant in this immense assemblage, are the Virgin Mary, the Infant Jesus, and St. Joseph, treated in a curious fashion, modelled on the manner of Giotto. "It is the chief ornament of the Amiens Museum," Gérôme would say jestingly; for he had largely lost respect for this prolonged and important effort which represented two years' work of a serious and diligent student of history.

The two flawless masterpieces of Gérôme, the eloquent interpreter of ancient Rome, are unquestionably his *Ave Caesar, Morituri te Salutant* (1859), purchased by Mathews, in which, in the presence of a bloated, overfed Vitellius, sitting

pactively in his imperial box, not far from the white Vestals, crowned with verbena, gladiators are fighting and dying in the circus, and *Pollice Verso* (1874) in which these same gladiators are represented, no longer as Roman soldiers, but in the exact costume that they wear at the moment when the Emperor and the crowd, ravenous for carnage, turn down their thumbs as signal for the death stroke. This work, published by Goupil, did not appear at the Salon. We must cite further *Gaius Maximus*, the *Chariot Race*, which aroused legitimate enthusiasm in America; *The Wild Beasts Entering the Arena* (1902) and we must not forget that Gérôme also expended his energy as a sculptor upon these same attractive gladiatorial figures.

Striking and pathetic contrast is also earnestly striven for and strongly rendered in *The Death of Caesar* (1859, 1867). One almost needs to be an incomparable "stage manager" in order to show the body of Caesar after this fashion, in the foreground, in the chamber deserted by the

Senators; one Conscript Father, as a touch of satire, has fallen asleep. The effect is powerful, even though it has been sought for with too obvious care. Undoubtedly Nadar had the laugh on his side when he compared the body of Caesar to a bundle of linen and called the picture "The Day of the Washerwoman." Gérôme appreciated the humour of this pleasantry. It is equally true that Baudelaire applauded the picture, exclaiming: "Certainly this time M. Gérôme's imagination has outdone itself; it passed through a fortunate crisis when it conceived of Caesar alone, stretched upon the ground before his overturned throne . . . this terrible epitome tells everything."

The clever erudition of the painter, who had already revealed himself as an adherent of the so-called group of "Pompeians," in the *Gynæceum* (1850), — in which we perceive a group of nude women in the court of a house in Herculaneum, — asserts itself once more, coupled with an incisive touch of epigram in *Two Augurs Un-*

able to Look at Each Other Without Laughing, and similarly in the *Cave Canem*, now at Vesoul (in front of a Roman house a slave is playing the rôle of watch dog), in the *Sale of Slaves at Rome* (1884), etc.

A similar ingenuity, with greater amplitude, constitutes the charm and the surprise of *Cleopatra and Caesar* (1886). Cleopatra has had herself brought into Caesar's cabinet in the palace at Alexandria, concealed in a bundle of clothing. "Her appearance there," said Maxime du Camp, who also praised the interest of the accessories, treated with exquisite care, "is perfectly chaste, in spite of her nudity." All the details are executed with a masterly command of picturesqueness and accuracy.

As a religious painter Gérôme has to his credit the *Virgin, Infant Jesus, and St. John* (1848), a youthful work imitated from Perugino, a *St. George*, in the church of Saint-Georges at Vesoul, a *St. Martin Cutting his Mantle*, in the ancient refectory of Saint-Martin-des-Champs, a *Death*

of St. Jerome (1878) at Saint-Séverin, a *Moses on Mt. Sinai*, and *The Plague at Marseilles*, and, most important of all, *Golgotha Consummatum Est*, intensely lugubrious and symbolic in aspect, with Christ and the two thieves appearing, through the desolate atmosphere, like writhing shadows on the cross. This conception cost the author a violent diatribe from Veuillot, while Edmund About, although making certain reservations, wrote on the other side: "The entire sum of qualities that are distinctive of M. Gérôme will be found in this picture."

As a painter of exotic life Gérôme remains an observer of the highest order. If he has not wholly revealed Italy to us in his *Guardians of the Herd* and his *Pifferari* (1855, 1857), he has at least done so in the case of Egypt, still deeply impregnated with an ancient and splendid civilization, naïve and at the same time venerable, Egypt before the advent of tourists, a luminous land where the Nile and the Desert reign supreme, a land of magnificence and of savagery. Land-

scapes of this Egypt of poetic mystery, and of Palestine as well, childish or perverse *almas*, rude Albanian Chiefs, Turbaned Turks,—one never wearies of these decorative effects, these clear visions, these scenes of animation, whether violent or delicate, the people, the vegetation, the fabrics, all resplendent under the marvellous sky of the Orient.

In the company of this intrepid, venturesome and observant traveller, we witness the passage of *Egyptian Recruits Crossing the Desert*, we are present at *Prayers in the House of an Albanian Chief*, we pause in the *Plain of Thebes*, not far from *Memmon and Sesostris*, and we watch the Camels at the Drinking Trough, so admirably realized. Gérôme, who had a gift for finding the right and pleasing phrase, gave this rather neat definition of a camel: “The Ship of the Sea of Sand.”

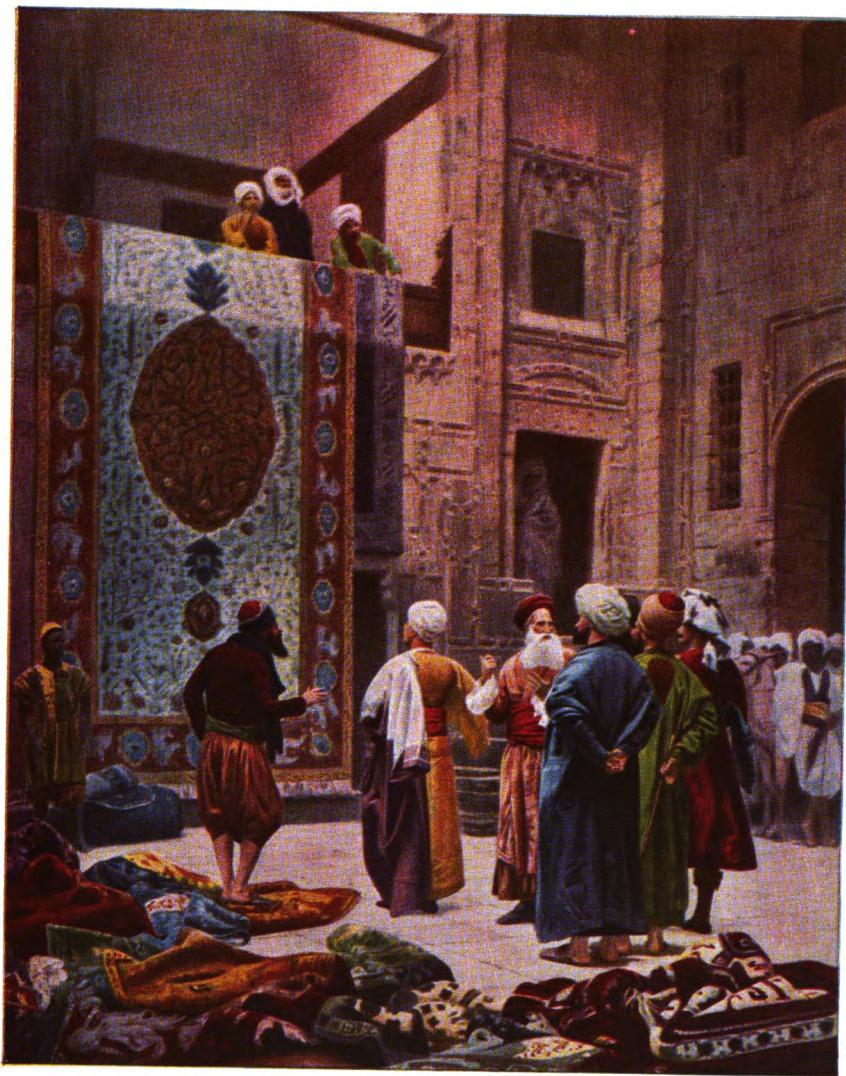
Similarly, the *Egyptian Straw-chopper* (1861, again exhibited in 1867, and purchased by M. Werlé) symbolizes, simply yet forcefully, agri-

cultural Egypt, and all the varied shadings of her pastoral poetry. Then again, there is *The Prisoner* (1863), in which a boat is making its way along the vast and pacific Nile. Two negro oarsmen, the master, a bashibazouk, are in the prow; and in the stern, beside a buffoon, who apparently derides him, while twanging the strings of a guitar, the prisoner lies cross-wise, fast bound, and abandons himself to his cruel destiny. There, in a setting of enchanted beauty, we have the chief actors in this original drama, in which dream and reality are blended.

What a horde of types, some of them bizarre, others simply comic! There are, taking them as they come, a *Turkish Butcher in Jerusalem* (1863), *The Alma* (Professional Singing Girl—1864), *The Slaves in the Market Place*, *The Clothing Merchant at Cairo*, *The Albanians Playing Chess* (1867), *The Itinerant Merchant at Cairo* (1869). Then there is the *Promenade of the Harem*, and still others, the *Santon* (Turkish Monk) at the *Door of the Mosque* and *Women at the Bath*

PLATE VII.—THE VENDOR OF RUGS
(In a Private Collection, United States)

From his numerous journeys to the East, Gérôme brought back many curious memoranda of picturesque scenes, which he subsequently converted into brilliant canvases. He excelled in reproducing the caressing beauty of shimmering carpets and the rippling sheen of silken textures.



PIERRE LAFITTE & CIE, PARIS

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(1876), the *Arab and his Courser* and *The Return from the Hunt* (1878).

In the company of this experienced and reliable guide, we wander from *Jerusalem* (1868) to the *Great Bath at Broussa* (1885), from a *Corner of Cairo* to *Medinet* and *Fayoum*. Here we have the severed heads in the *Mosque of El Hecanin*, the nude woman in the *Moorish Bath*, all the barbarity and all the grace of the Orient,—and invariably the anecdote, whether agreeable or sinister, blends with the matchless splendour of the landscape.

To this list must be added *Recreation in Camp*, a *Souvenir of Moldavia* (Salon of 1854), in which a soldier is dancing before his assembled comrades, to the sound of drums, fifes, and violins. A sentinel keeps watch. It is a picture taken in the act, and intensely real.

It is easy to detect the historian, or, to adopt the expression of M. Jules Claretie, the “*Memoir Maker*,” possessed of the true gift, agreeable and individual, lurking behind every one of the works

of this authoritative orientalist. He dedicated himself quite naturally and with great success to the interpretation of history and of the historic and literary anecdote.

His love of contrasts, his gift for depicting locality and somehow conveying the very atmosphere belonging to the varied scenes that are to be brought before the spectator's eye, give amplitude to such attractive little compositions as *Louis XIV. and Molière* (1863), and *A Collaboration* (1874); evoke the whole sombre tragedy of the death of Maréchal Ney, *December 7, 1815, Nine o'clock in the Morning* (1868); and appeal successively to our curiosity, our sympathy, or our admiration, with a Frederick II., conqueror of Silesia, playing on his flute, the *King Flutist* (1874, purchased by M. H. Oppenheim), *His Gray Eminence* (1874), in which the austere and dominant Father Joseph is making his way alone, down the stairway, in the presence of the obsequious courtiers; a Bonaparte day-dreaming before the Sphinx, *Oedipus* (1886), a *Bonaparte at Cairo* gazing at the town from the

back of his Arab horse, a *Bonaparte in Egypt*, mounted on a white dromedary, dreaming of his omnipotence, of his conquest of the universe, and surrounded by his overdriven soldiers.

As a matter of fact, Gérôme made a sort of hero-worship of Napoleon and the Napoleonic epic, resembling in this respect his friend, M. Frédéric Masson, the celebrated historian of the Emperor, who was better qualified than any other writer to pay an eloquent tribute to this *Bonaparte in Egypt*.

“Bonaparte is no longer on the road to Syria, he is on the road to India; he is hesitating between the two halves of the world that he holds in his hands; he is weighing the destiny of Alexander against the destiny of Cæsar; he is asking himself whether Asia, to which he holds the key, is a fair exchange for Europe which he has just quitted; and while his dream embraces the universe, he leaves his human rubbish heap to suffer.”

Gérôme is wholly himself when he has an

anecdote to give us, whether it be subtle, humorous, kindly, or dramatic, and even,—why not use the word?—melodramatic.

Classified thus, *The Duel after the Masquerade* fully deserves its brilliant reputation. Reproduced, not only in lithographs and engravings, but even transferred to the theatre (given at the Gymnase, in 1881, by Mme. Fould), its subject has become a matter of general knowledge. It is winter in the Bois de Boulogne. A number of people in fancy costume are bending over a wounded Pierrot, while one of the witnesses of this improvised duel is leading away the murderer, the Harlequin.

One can see at once what a tremendous appeal a subject like this would have for the general public.

This singular drama, taking place in the snow, all this joyousness ending in bloodshed and perhaps death, is so fantastic that it leaves a lasting impression. It was, by the way, as M. Guillau-min has explained, suggested by an actual duel

that took place between Deluns-Montaud, the Harlequin, and the Prefect of Police Bortelle, the Pierrot.

Undoubtedly there was, and still is, ground for criticism. Alexandre Dumas thought, not unreasonably, that serious-minded men of that age would not go out to fight each other in such a costume. Edmond About criticized the pose of Crispin supporting on his knee an entire group of spectators, along with the body of poor Pierrot. But Paul de Saint-Victor praised the "truthfulness of the postures, the etching-like precision of the heads, the wise planning of the whole composition."

In order to appreciate better the daring fantasy and the wise and invariably picturesque inventiveness of Gérôme, we have only to study further such works as the Frieze destined to be reproduced upon a vase commemorative of the Exposition of London (1853), *Rembrandt Etching* (exhibited in 1867, purchased by M. E. Fould), which has been admired for its golden half-

shadows and freely compared to Gerard Dow, the *Reception of the Siamese Ambassadors* (1865), *The First Kiss of the Sun* (1886), the *Poet, Thirst* (1888), and fantasies, such as, *The Amateur of Tulips*, *Whoever you are, here is your Master*; anecdotal portraits throwing side lights on history, such as: *They are Conspiring, or Not Convenient, Louis XI. visiting Cardinal Balue*, *Promenade of the Court in the Gardens of Versailles* (1896); animals full of life and prowess, such as: *The Lioness meeting a Jaguar* and *Ego nominor Leo*, a lion rendered life size; lastly, his studio interiors, in which he has chosen to depict himself exactly as he was, that is to say, a sincere, clear-sighted, and indefatigable workman.

In the most recent of these studio pictures, he appears, wearing a sculptor's blouse and occupied in modelling a statuette of a woman. He astonished his friends and admirers, during his last years, by his earnest labours in sculpture. His two groups, *The Gladiators* and *Anacreon, Bacchus and Cupid*, claimed the attention of the pub-

lic at the Exposition of 1878; and it was the same with his marble statue of *Omphale* (1887), his *Tanagra*, his *Dancing Girl*, his bronze *Lion* (1890, 1891), etc.

His efforts to revive the art of coloured or polychrome sculpture, the so-called chryselephantine sculpture, which invokes the aid of various precious elements, constitute one of the most curious and important artistic experiments of modern times, even though the result did not always come up to the expectation.

On February 2, 1892, in an unpublished letter addressed to M. Germain Bapst, who desired information concerning the artist's experiment, Gérôme wrote: "I have always been struck with a sense of the coldness of statues if, when the work is once finished, it is left in its natural state. I have already made some experiments and am continuing my efforts, for I am anxious to bring before the eyes of the public a few demonstrations that I hope will be conclusive. I know that there are a great many

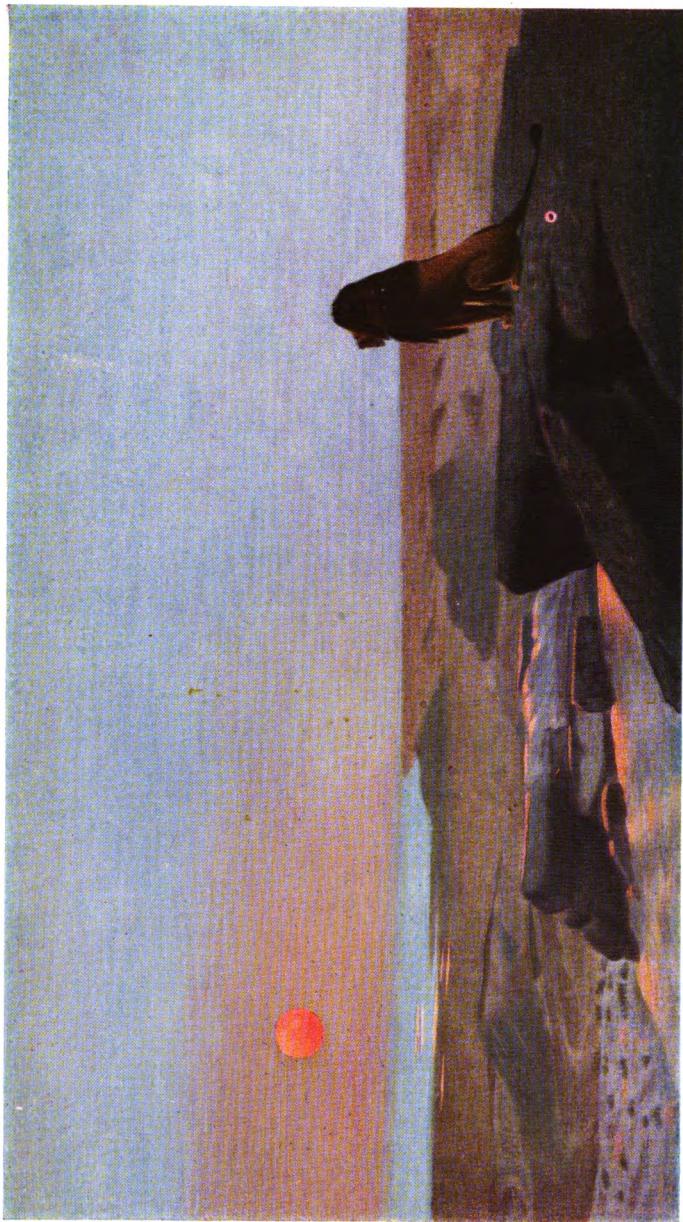
protests. The world always protests against anything which is, I will not merely say new, but even renewed; for it disturbs a good many people in their tranquillity and their routine." And after having first shown that ancient architecture was adorned with colours and that in chryselephantine sculpture the Greeks combined gold, tin, and ivory, that they painted the marble and united it with various metals, Gérôme added: "Shall I succeed? At least I shall have the honour of having made the attempt."

In the interesting study which M. Germain Bapst devoted to this question, after having, as we have seen, consulted the artist himself, he recalled the fact that both in chateaux and in churches the Mediæval statuary was coloured. In Greece, the Minerva Parthenos contained a weight of gold equivalent to more than 2,200,000 francs in the French currency of to-day. The statue of Jupiter at Olympus was partly of ivory and partly of gold.

Towards the middle of the nineteenth century,

PLATE VIII.—THE TWO MAJESTIES
(In a Private Collection, United States)

In the mournful immensity of African solitudes, the king of planets mounts towards the zenith, darting his fires upon the arid land that he consumes, while the other king of the desert, the lion, contemplates the triumphant ascension of his rival in the sky. Gérôme has rendered the scene with an eloquence all the greater because he has employed such simple means.



the Duc de Luynes undertook, in collaboration with the architect Dubau, to produce an example of chryselephantine sculpture, which cost him more than 500,000 francs and was placed on view at the Exposition Universelle held in the Palais de l'Industrie in 1855.

Gérôme in his turn made a like attempt, in his *Bellona*, in which, to remedy the cold immobility of the material, he coloured both the ivory and the marble and at the same time invoked the aid of silver, bronze, gold, and enamel. He had associated with him several experienced collaborators, such as M. Siot-Decauville, who was to cast the face of Bellona in bronze, Messrs. Moreau-Vauthier and Delacour to point the ivory, M. Gautruche to attend to the verde-antique and the electroplating. Lastly, Gallé, and M. Lalique as well, made a number of trial models for the little head of Medusa.

Among the other examples of Gérôme's sculpture, mention must be made of *The Entrance of Bonaparte into Cairo* (1897), *Bonaparte*, a bust

(1897), *Timour-Lang, the Lion Tamer* (1898), *Frederick the Great* (1899), *Washington* (1901), *The expiring Eagle of Waterloo*, *The Bowlers* (1902), *Cupid the Metallurgist*, a statue in bronze, *Corinth*, a statue in polychrome marble and bronze (1904).

THE ART OF GÉRÔME

“If you wish to be happy,” Gérôme used to say to his pupils, “remain students all your lives.” For his own part he applied himself ceaselessly to his studies, trusting nothing to chance. He had an extraordinarily methodical and orderly mind, even in regard to the smallest details. It is related that, when he was absent on his travels, he would notify his models several months in advance, so that they would be on hand to pose for him in his studio, from the very day of his arrival.

Being partly a traditionalist and partly an independent, he did not always possess the gift of pleasing the critics, and he loved them none too well. And when one of them asked him one day for a sketch, he replied, “I do not pay to be ap-

plauded." But he was exceedingly strict in his self-criticism. In one of his notes entrusted to his relative Timbal, he wrote: "I am my own severest critic. . . . I am under no delusion regarding my works."

On the other hand, and it is well to dwell upon this in order to grasp his personality, Gérôme was far from being an eclectic. Of the work of Puvis de Chavannes he said with virulence: "It won't stand analysis, it is a series of mannikins set on the ground all out of plumb, and nothing seems to fit in." And he made a play upon words by employing, in place of Puvis, the Latin word *pulvis*, which signifies dust.

After his appointment as professor at the École des Beaux-Arts, he did his best to have Manet banished from it. He couched his protest in the following energetic terms: "I am certain that Manet was capable of painting good pictures. But he chose to be the apostle of a decadent fashion, the scrap-work school of art. I, for my part, have been chosen by the State to teach the

orthography of art to young students. . . . I do not think it right to offer them as a model the extremely arbitrary and sensational work of a man who, although gifted with rare qualities, did not develop them." In his opinion, it would have been more suitable to exhibit such works in a bar-room than at the Beaux-Arts. M. Coutil relates that Gérôme said further on this same subject: "The first merit a painting should have is to be luminous and alluring in colour, and not dull and obscure."

He had, for that matter, no more tolerance for Millet than for Sisley, Monet, and Pissaro. On one occasion, he assured M. Jules Claretie that if Millet could return and again send his canvases to the Salon, he would refuse them over again! And, when his distinguished interlocutor protested, "Oh, come now, Gérôme, you don't mean that!" he declared unhesitatingly, "I mean just that, and nothing else."

Messrs. Moreau-Vauthier and Dagnan-Bouveret have given some very accurate and useful

details regarding his methods of instruction and of work. They have shown him to us at his task, both as painter and professor.

He emphasized the importance of construction, and of the character of the form, rather than the form itself, which is a matter of temperament. He insisted that a scene must be visualized in its completeness, as a harmonious and fully significant whole. Emile Augier, for instance, with whom he felt no annoyance at being compared, the excellent comedian, Got, the younger Dumas, Gounod,—all of these he loved for their absolute clarity, and he demanded it of them. He declared that one has no right to paint off-hand, without a model; and he also held that one has no right to make hasty, careless sketches.

His method was distinguished by its scrupulous and admirable precision. Impeccable order always reigned in his studio. M. Dagnan-Bouveret writes that his palette and brushes were scrupulously cared for. He used to overspread his canvases with a uniform foundation of half-

tones more or less warm or cold, using preparations made by Troigras. He roughed in the whole picture very rapidly, and this first rough draft, according to connoisseurs, was always extremely interesting.

In his paintings, he proved that the strength of colouring is in inverse proportion to the intensity of light. He had a marvellous faculty for making the delicate shadings of nature correspond with the psychological sentiments that their aspects evoke. From this comes his amazing variety.

A man of wide reading and deep culture, Gérôme had a profound love, for the truth, for reality just as it is, holding that it is the artist's first duty to know his place, his time, his episode, and the one special angle of vision that will give the rarest and most fruitful results.

On the eve of his death, he was still lauding the merits of photography, which has the advantage of being able to snatch a document straight out of life, without falsifying it by giving it a

personal interpretation that must always be more or less inaccurate.

Whatever allowance must be made for what we may call the personal equation of an artist, his own individual temperament, it is not unprofitable to recall this opinion of Gérôme's, for it helps us to acquire a better conception of his art, based as it was upon accuracy and unwavering truth.

Truth, which he once depicted in her well, killed by liars and mountebanks (*Mendacibus in histrionibus occisa in puto jacet alma Veritas*, Salon of 1895), always charmed and inspired him. He rendered it more attractive by his admirable sincerity, by his chivalrous and imaginative spirit, as well as by his archeological and ethnographic learning.

Thanks to this lofty conscientiousness in research, his work, erudite and entertaining at the same time, making distant and vanished civilizations live again, and reproducing atmospheres and local settings with a delicacy that at times

is a trifle specious, but always incomparably picturesque, cannot fail to please and charm to-day as it did yesterday, and to-morrow as it does to-day.

Accordingly, it is with good reason that M. Soubies has lauded his fine attention to detail, and that M. Thiebaut-Sisson has summed him up in the following terms: "The artist created his formula for himself. He extracted from it the maximum effect that it contained." And even while we glorify and venerate those painters gifted with a graver or more lyric vision, a bolder or more laboured craftsmanship, we must freely subscribe to the opinion of Edmond About when he said of Gérôme: "He is the subtlest, the most ingenious, the most brilliant . . . of his generation"

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